

Coal-fired power plant proposal advances

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RICHFIELD, Utah (AP) -- A proposed coal-fired power plant that has divided this central Utah town is a step closer to being built.

The Sevier County planning and zoning commission approved a preliminary permit for the 270-megawatt power plant near Sigurd on a 3-2 vote Wednesday.

Many residents said they were disappointed with the decision.

This is "not what I was hoping for," said Utah Moms for Clean Air member Shaunna Bastian, who lives about a quarter mile from the proposed plant site. "I will wake every single morning, open my blinds and look at this thing."

The tensions about the proposed power plant have been around for several years and resulted in lawsuits filed by the Utah chapter of the Sierra Club and protests by local residents and advocacy groups.

Bastian says Sevier Power Co. misrepresented several aspects of the project, including the potential health impacts of piles of ash that will be a byproduct of the plant.

"I like being able to breathe," she said. "Out of the eight members of my family, four of us have asthma, including myself. This would just make it so much worse for us. My children would have to breathe this."

She said if the plant is built, her family will probably move.

"We don't want to move," she said. "I was hoping tonight would be a great Christmas present and they would say 'no' or push (the project) back, but they didn't."

Bruce Taylor, co-owner and manager of Sevier Power, acknowledged the public opposition.

"It's always difficult for people to see industry around their house," he said. "Our goal is to be as friendly to those people as humanly possible."

Clark said the potentially harmful elements left in the ash would pose no health concern.

Critics have argued the plant would increase pollution in the narrow valley encompassing Sigurd, Richfield and the surrounding communities. However, the Utah Division of Air Quality has signed off on the project.

Sevier Power recently won a court decision that threw out an appeal by environmentalists, paving the way for the project's eventual development.

The planning and zoning commission's vote send the plant proposal to the Sevier County Commission, which is expected to scrutinize it before taking a vote.

"It is a very divisive issue within the county," said Dick Cumiskey of the Sevier Citizens for Clean Air and Water. "Before the commissioners can sign off on it, they've got to satisfy not only themselves, but the citizens of the county that the correct decision is being made."

Information from: Deseret Morning News